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Tia Patsavas

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Unique Opportunities Allow Students to Intern in Urban or International Settings

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From a unique program in Bloomington-Normal to urban and even international settings, Illinois Wesleyan students can choose from an array of internship opportunities. Some of these opportunities include the Community Partnership Program (CPP), Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) Chicago Program, affiliations with universities in Washington, D.C. and study abroad programs.

Community Partnership Program

The Community Partnership Program is the only internship of its kind in the country because of its unique format. State Farm hires Illinois Wesleyan students as fulltime interns in the summer, with participants working three days per week at State Farm. Illinois Wesleyan's Action Research Center (ARC) places student participants with a community partner organization two days per week, and one night per week they meet with ARC to learn about community development and nonprofit infrastructure. This 3-2-1 experience gives students a look at how for-profit organizations, nonprofits and higher education work together in Bloomington-Normal.



A State Farm Representative greets business major Kevin Slawkowski '16 at this fall's Internship Fair.

Each year, an average of 50 to 60 students apply for the internships, competing for approximately 10 available positions. The interns work within their areas of interest at State Farm and at a local nonprofit for a tailored experience.

As a part of the 2014 CPP group, accounting major Khurram Ghayur '16 (Mount Pleasant, Iowa) worked in the financial shared services sector of the financial operations department at State Farm. He also worked with the Bloomington-Normal YMCA, where his projects included applying for a grant for the YMCA's New Generation Youth Soccer League.

For Ghayur, the connections and relationships he made throughout the summer were the most rewarding aspects of the program. "The opportunity to work on an array of projects within various areas allowed me to develop a network of business professionals, community leaders and fellow college students that will last much longer than my summer internship experience," he said.

Urban Programs in Chicago or Washington, D.C.

For those who wish to explore an urban environment during their academic career, IWU students can apply to affiliate programs in Chicago and Washington, D.C.

"Our affiliated domestic partnerships provide students with easy access to quality

learning opportunities and add value to their education,” said Laurie Diekhoff, assistant director and internship coordinator at the Hart Career Center.

The ACM Chicago Program allows students to spend the fall or spring semester living, interning and learning in Chicago. Concentrations are offered in arts, entrepreneurship or urban studies, and students participate in four key components: a local internship, seminars, a course about the city, and an independent study project.

Katie Rose Brosnan '13, who focused on urban studies as an ACM Chicago student in 2011, is now working as the campus outreach coordinator for ACM Chicago. She said multiple openings remain for the spring 2015 semester.



Katie Rose Brosnan '13

Brosnan, who said she learned about the ACM Chicago Program during her first year at Illinois Wesleyan, was drawn to its combination of internship opportunities and classes related to her area of interest.

“I was really interested in issues of social justice, but students who are interested in the arts or entrepreneurship get to meet with practitioners and actually experience it,” she said.

In the nation’s capital, aspiring public officials, journalists and policy makers can enhance their college experiences through programs at Georgetown or American University.

The Semester in Washington, D.C. Program with Georgetown University offers an innovative program that blends classroom learning and hands-on experience. Participants can pursue research and internship opportunities with federal agencies, law firms, news organizations, nonprofits and public relations agencies.

Political science major Anne Kehler '15 (Denver, Colo.) and political science and business administration double major Brexton Isaacs '15 (Byron, Ill.) spent the spring of 2014 as participants of the Georgetown program, where they both studied politics and public policy and interned with local organizations.

Illinois Wesleyan is one of more than 200 U.S. colleges and universities and 40 international institutes of higher education to partner with American University’s Washington Semester Program. This opportunity offers students real-world experience and expert insights while helping them make connections with leaders in Washington, D.C. Political science major Kevin Gordon '16 (Tinley Park, Ill.) spent the spring of 2014 in this program, which combines experimental learning with academic seminars and internships.

Students who participate in these and other programs report significant learning experiences in and out of the classroom. “The (ACM Chicago) program prepared me to go back to my campus as a far more engaged and aware student, which has crossed over into all parts of my life,” Brosnan said.

International Internships

Numerous students have pursued internship and research opportunities while studying abroad with programs through School for International Training (SIT) Study Abroad and Institute for the International Education of Students (IES)—and they are not alone. “Nationally the number of students participating in internships or some other practical experience is up: the most recent Open Doors survey showed seven percent of students participating,” said Stacey Shimizu, director of the International Office.

According to Shimizu, the upward trend is true at Illinois Wesleyan as well. “More and more students are certainly talking with me about participating in some sort of hands-on experience while abroad,” she said.



Amanda King '15

One of those students, environmental studies major Amanda King '15 (Peoria, Ill.) spent a semester studying and interning in Australia. With her study abroad program, which allowed her to choose to participate in an internship, research opportunity, or other practical work experience, King worked as a community gardens intern with Cultivating Community—an Australian nonprofit that provides access to healthy food for people living in public housing.

According to King, her experiences blending a community aspect with gardening during her internship inspired her to implement similar techniques both in her hometown and during her work as an intern at Illinois Wesleyan's Peace Garden.

“For students who do an internship or some other hands-on work abroad, they get a double benefit: practical experience, coupled with the benefits that we know come from deep engagement with another culture, like problem-solving, intercultural communication skills and adaptability,” Shimizu said.

By Tia Patsavas '16